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Prime Minister Hatoyama and his administration decided yesterday to summarize the possible options this month at the Okinawa Base Issues Review Committee, a joint panel of the government and the ruling parties, on the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield facility from its current location in Okinawa Prefecture's central city of Ginowan, and to present several plans to the U.S. government. The government is now looking into the possibility of building a land-based facility on the premises of Camp Schwab, another U.S. military base located in the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago. The option of continuing to use Futenma airfield will also be included in the plans.

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa visited the city of Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture yesterday and met with Iwakuni Mayor Yoshihiko Fukuda. In the meeting, Kitazawa told Fukuda: "We will work it (the relocation plan) out by the end of February. The question is how to negotiate with the United States. Depending on circumstances, we may have to negotiate on several plans." Meanwhile, Chief Cabinet

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Secretary Hirofumi Hirano met with Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima in the city of Naha yesterday, and Hirano also told Nakaima that he will inform the governor (before negotiating with the U.S. government) of whether the government will present only one plan or more.

The People's New Party, one of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan's two coalition partners, is considering building a 1,500-meter-long runway on the premises of Camp Schwab, and the Hatoyama cabinet is mulling a 500-meter tarmac. However, there is also an idea being floated within the Hatoyama administration to close down Futenma airfield and allow the U.S. military to use the airfield in the event of emergencies. Specifically, the Hatoyama administration is believed to be exploring the possibility of relocating the Futenma-based helicopters to a Kyushu-based facility of the Self-Defense Forces or Iejima and other outlying islands in Okinawa Prefecture. In the meantime, the Social Democratic Party, the other coalition partner of the DPJ, has been insisting on relocating Futenma airfield outside Okinawa Prefecture or outside Japan. Out of consideration for the SDP, the Hatoyama administration, in its negotiations with the U.S. government, will likely present the SDP's proposal of Futenma relocation to Guam or elsewhere (outside Japan).

4) Government sounds out U.S. unofficially on Futenma relocation to inland area of Camp Schwab

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
February 20, 2010

In connection with the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, the government and the ruling parties began the coordination process on Feb. 19 to make an inland area in Camp Schwab (in Nago City) a top option. It intends to enter into negotiations with the U.S. side after the Okinawa base issues examination committee of the government and the ruling parties discusses this plan and decides on concrete proposals.

Commenting on the Camp Schwab inland plan, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama indicated on the same day that "we are taking all the options into consideration and discussing them one by one." This was in response to questions from reporters at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. In connection with this, a government source said that the U.S. side is being sounded out unofficially on this proposal.

Two concrete proposals have emerged with regard to this plan to build a new runway in an inland area of Camp Schwab: (1) build a runway approximately 1,500 meters long required for the Futenma base's replacement and (2) build a new runway (a few hundred meters long) to be used as a helipad, while another location will be identified for a runway for use by fixed-wing aircraft.

The reclamation of land to build a new runway in the coastal area of Camp Schwab under the existing relocation plan will require the Okinawa governor's permission. The proposed inland plan will not

require any reclamation, and since the new runway will be built inside a U.S. military base, it is believed that the relocation process can take place smoothly.

5) PM Hatoyama denies that U.S. was officially sounded out on Camp Schwab inland plan

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SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
February 20, 2010

With regard to the emergence of a proposal to relocate the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa) to an inland area in Camp Schwab (in Henoko, Nago City), Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama stated in the late afternoon of Feb. 19: "We are at the stage of taking all the options into consideration and discussing them one by one. Therefore, we have not sounded out the U.S. through official channels." This was in response to questions from reporters at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

Hatoyama also said: "In the end, we will make a decision that keeps the coalition government intact," stressing that the final decision to be made by the end of May will be one that the Social Democratic Party, which advocates the Futenma base's relocation out of Okinawa or out of Japan, can agree to.

6) DM Kitazawa says talks with U.S. on Futenma relocation to start in March

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
February 22, 2010

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa gave a speech at a gathering for Parliamentary Secretary Daizo Kusuda in Onojo City, Fukuoka Prefecture on Feb. 21. Discussing the selection of the relocation site for the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa by the examination committee of the government and the ruling parties, he said: "The most important thing is for us to narrow down the proposals this month and start the coordination process with the affected localities and the U.S. in March," indicating his intention to begin negotiations with the U.S. and coordination with the local governments in March.

In his speech, Kitazawa stressed the active operations of Chinese submarines in waters surrounding Japan. He said that from this standpoint, "the presence of U.S. Marines in Okinawa is very important."

7) Okada, Rudd agree to seek diplomatic solution to whaling issue

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
February 21, 2010

Junko Takahashi, Sydney

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, who is visiting Australia, held talks with Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on February 20. Although Rudd indicated on the 19th that his government would bring Japan's research whaling in the Southern Ocean to the International Court of Justice, the two leaders agreed to aim at a diplomatic solution (in their talks on the 20th). In the talks, Okada urged Australia to take a "resolute response" to port calls by protest vessels of the anti-whaling Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. In response, Rudd indicated that regulating port calls would be difficult, citing a lack of legal grounds.

"There is a tendency to become emotional over the whaling issue, but it is important to settle the matter through rational talks," Rudd was quoted as saying by the Japanese side. Okada too said: "It is

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important to conduct talks carefully so as not to affect the overall Japan-Australia relationship." The two leaders also confirmed that

they will display political leadership for the early conclusion of an economic partnership agreement (EPA) to liberalize trade in goods and services.

Okada also held talks with Defense Minister John Faulkner on Feb. 20. They agreed to begin launch official talks for the conclusion of an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) to provide supplies and services to each other during UN peacekeeping operations and on other occasions. The two countries will hold a (two-plus-two) foreign and defense ministerial meeting in Japan in the first half of this year with the aim of reaching an agreement there.

8) Australia to propose gradually abolishing Japan's whaling; if agreement not reached, matter will be taken to court

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
February 22, 2010

Junko Takahashi, Perth

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada held talks with Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith in Perth on Feb. 21. Smith explicitly said at a joint press conference after the talks that his country will propose to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that Japan abolish its research whaling in the Southern Ocean in a phased approach and that if an agreement is not reached, Australia will take the matter to the International Court of Justice. Okada said: "The reference to the Court is regrettable. If the matter is taken to the Court, we will firmly assert the legitimacy (of Japan's research whaling)."

Smith said that although Australia has made efforts to reach an agreement over the last two years through bilateral talks and at the IWC, "time is running out." Australia will officially propose the IWC as early as Feb. 22 that Japan gradually abolish its whaling after a certain period of time. Meanwhile, Okada emphasized the need to aim at a solution through talks, saying: "We must act carefully so that this issue will not affect the overall Japan-Australia relationship. We must conduct talks in a level-headed manner."

9) Japan, Australia to work together for nuclear nonproliferation; agreement reached to hold regular talks

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Abridged)
February 22, 2010

Tomohiro Takasa, Perth

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, who is visiting Australia, held talks with his Australian counterpart Stephen Smith in the country's western city of Perth, and they released a joint statement saying that the two countries will work together to achieve nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation. Acknowledging the role played by nuclear deterrence, the statement said that the two countries will deepen their discussions on the idea of prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. The statement set forth a policy direction for the two countries to work closely in the run-up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference to be held in May.

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The joint statement titled "Toward a Nuclear-Free World" clearly defined the two countries' stance of supporting U.S. President Barack Obama's vision. The two foreign ministers also decided to hold regular meetings to confirm the progress of implementing a report on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament that was produced by an international panel in December.

The two leaders expressed their strong concern about nuclear development by North Korea and Iran. They called on UN members to implement sanctions against North Korea, while urging Pyongyang to immediately return to the Six-Party Talks.

Okada and Smith also agreed to hold a (two-plus-two) foreign and

defense ministerial meeting in Tokyo during the first half of this year and to begin administrative-level talks for concluding an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) to provide food and fuel to each other. They also confirmed a policy direction to deepen dialogue among Japan, the United States, and Australia, maintaining that the United States' involvement is indispensable for stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

10) Japanese suprapartisan lawmakers deliver letter for U.S. President to Ambassador Roos, in support of his vision of world without nuclear weapons

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
February 20, 2010

A group of nonpartisan Japanese Diet members visited the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo yesterday and delivered a letter addressed to U.S. President Barack Obama to Ambassador John Roos, expressing their support for the President's efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The group included Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) member Hideo Hiraoka, Liberal Democratic Party member Yasutoshi Nishimura, and New Komeito member Masao Akamatsu.

The letter notes: "As lawmakers of the only country that has suffered atomic bomb attacks, we assume 'the moral responsibility' to back up the President's efforts with all our strength." The letter specifies that the group (1) totally supports the President's goal of moving toward translating his vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world into concrete actions; and (2) asks the U.S. to declare that its sole role regarding nuclear weapons is to deter other countries from using nuclear weapons.

A total of 204 lawmakers from the DPJ, the Social Democratic Party, the People's New Party, the LDP, the New Komeito, and the Your Party signed the letter.

Ambassador Roos said: "Eliminating nuclear weapons is a very important challenge," but he reportedly added: "The U.S would like to take a pragmatic approach on this matter."

11) Japan to sign intelligence protection accord with NATO; plans to use information for aid to Afghanistan

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
February 22, 2010

The Japanese government and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have agreed to sign an accord designed to protect

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confidential information, such as military secrets. Japan has already concluded a similar pact with the U.S., so this will be the second time for Japan to sign such a pact. The pact is aimed at guaranteeing the strict management of the provided information and will make it easier for Japan to obtain local security information necessary for its reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan and other activities. This development will also pave the way for cooperation between both sides in the defense area, such as the joint development of weapons.

The Japan-NATO information protection agreement includes measures to require countries that receive confidential formation to manage the information in the same way as the information providers. In the event the information is leaked, the countries involved will be punished based on their respective domestic laws. The two sides are expected to sign the accord within this year.

Japan has joined the Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, but the NATO force, which has participated in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the PRT, is not allowed to provide Japan with security intelligence because the two parties have yet to sign an information protection accord.

Under the new pact, it will become possible for Japan to decide on the scope of its activities based on confidential information such as the degree of danger in certain regions. A senior Defense

Ministry official commented: "It will become possible for both sides to jointly develop equipment and share information on weapons in the future."

12) DM Kitazawa emphasizes relocation of carrier aircraft to Iwakuni base to take place "as planned"

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
February 21, 2010

Yasushi Sengoku, Norio Oyama

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa visited Iwakuni City in Yamaguchi Prefecture on Feb. 20 and met Mayor Yoshihiko Fukuda at the city hall. In connection with the relocation of carrier-based aircraft units from Atsugi base (straddling Ayase and Yamato in Kanagawa Prefecture) to Iwakuni base under the U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) realignment plan, Kitazawa said: "We have never asked for a change of plan," indicating that he intends to proceed with the relocation in accordance with the Japan-U.S. road map for the implementation of USFJ realignment. Fukuda reminded him that he should fulfill his responsibility to give an explanation to Iwakuni citizens.

13) DPJ candidate defeated in Nagasaki gubernatorial election:
LDP-New Komeito-backed Nakamura wins

YOMIURI (Top play) (Lead para)
February 22, 2010

Newcomer Hodo Nakamura (59), an independent and a former Nagasaki Prefecture vice governor backed by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the New Komeito, was elected in the Nagasaki gubernatorial election on Feb. 21, defeating by a wide margin six other newcomers, including Tsuyoshi Hashimoto (40), an independent recommended by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Social Democratic Party, and the People's New Party. Hashimoto is a former chief of the reform

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promotion office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The opposition party-backed candidate won the election amid declining public support ratings due to politics-and-money scandals involving Prime Minister Hatoyama and DPJ Secretary General Ozawa. The election result could affect deliberations on the fiscal 2010 budget bill and the political situation leading up to the Upper House election this summer. The voter turnout was 60.08 percent (52.27 percent in the previous election).

14) "I will attend the U.S. hearing with pleasure": Exchange of questions and answers with President Toyoda

SANKEI (Page 11) (Full)
February 20, 2010

The following is the exchange of questions and answers between Toyota Motors President Akio Toyoda and the press corps in Nagoya City on Feb. 19.

"I received a formal request to attend a hearing from (U.S. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee) Chairman Towns. I have decided to attend the hearing with willingness. I intend to explain the situation in all sincerity."

-- You said at a press conference on the 17th that you would not attend a hearing.

"Whether I will go or not is not a matter for us to decide. I am supposed to go (to attend a hearing) if I am asked. If it had been up to me to decide, I would have said (that I would attend a hearing) at that press conference."

-- What would you most like to stress?

"First of all, I would like to stress to our customers that they should feel safe in our vehicles because we are cooperating (with U.S. authorities) in the investigation to determine the cause. I will accept criticism of our response to problems. I would like to

make efforts to gain understanding of our thinking toward customers and our thinking toward America by all means."

-- What is your schedule in the U.S.?

"I have not yet determined my schedule at all. It is still being arranged."

-- Do you have a plan to hold a press conference or meet government officials involved?

"I think I have. However, nothing has been decided yet."

Will you meet with Secretary of Transportation LaHood?

"I think I can meet him at the hearing."

-- Are you going to visit dealerships?

"I plan to do so. However, nothing is certain yet."

15) Toyota Motors president visits U.S.

ASAHI (Page 22) (Full)

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February 22, 2010

Hitoki Nakagawa, Washington

Toyota Motors President Akio Toyoda on Feb. 20 left for the U.S. to attend the upcoming U.S. congressional hearing, which is to be held by the U.S. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on the 24th. Toyoda's schedule up to the hearing has not been disclosed. He appears to be focused on preparations.

At the hearing Toyoda is expected to be asked whether Toyota conducted recalls without delay and whether its electronic throttle control system is the cause of the acceleration problem. Toyoda explained his view of the series of recalls of Toyota vehicles during press conferences held in Japan. However, he had delegated technical explanations to Vice President Shinichi Sasaki (responsible for quality assurance).

Since Toyoda represents Toyota Motors, he needs to reply to questions on his own at the hearing, if requested. Since the hearing will affect the fate of Toyota, as one company executive put it, Toyoda is expected to hold detailed preliminary discussions with executives of North America Toyota Motors.

16) Government informs China it may take case to International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea if China goes ahead with gas field development

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)

February 22, 2010

Yudai Nakazawa

It was learned on Feb. 21 that the government has decided on a new policy on dealing with the dispute between Japan and China over the gas fields in East China Sea, including the option of filing a case with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and China has been notified of this new policy. The two governments decided in June 2008 to shelve the issue of delineating a boundary and agreed on joint development of the Shirakaba (Chunxiao in Chinese) gas field. However, China had adopted a negative attitude on negotiations to sign an agreement, and Japan reckoned that China might renege on the 2008 agreement. However, China reacted strongly to Japan's new policy, and the two sides failed to break the stalemate.

According to a source on Japan-China diplomacy, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada notified Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi of the new policy at their talks on Jan. 17. Okada told Yang that if China "violates the agreement," such as by starting production

unilaterally, Japan would not hesitate to take the case, including the question of a boundary, to the international tribunal. Yang expressed strong displeasure, arguing that "China has sovereign rights over Chunxiao, so (the filing of a case) is unacceptable," thus cutting short the discussion.

17) Sea Shepherd flashes laser beams at Japanese whaling vessel

YOMIURI (Page 38) (Full)
February 22, 2010

The Fisheries Agency announced on Feb. 21 that the anti-whaling Sea
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Shepherd Conservation Society flashed its laser beams at the Nisshin Maru, the mother ship of the Japanese research whaling fleet, in the Southern Ocean on the evening of Feb. 21, Japan time. No Japanese crewmembers were injured as a result.

The harassment was carried out by the Bob Barker, a protest boat of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, and lasted for about 20 minutes. One of the Sea Shepherd members is being detained after he intruded into a Japanese research whaling vessel on Feb. 15. The group has been obstructing Japan's research whaling.

18) Poll: Cabinet support spirals down to 37 PERCENT

ASAHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
February 22, 2010

The rate of public support for the cabinet of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama fell below 40 PERCENT for the first time since its launch, according to a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey conducted Feb. 20-21. In the survey, the Hatoyama cabinet's support rate was 37 PERCENT, down from the 41 PERCENT rating in the previous spot poll conducted Feb. 5-6. The nonsupport rate leveled off at 46 PERCENT (45 PERCENT in the previous poll). A total of 81 PERCENT said ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa should explain the problem of his political funds in the Diet. The figure shows that there are still deep-seated calls for clarification of the matter.

Last December, the cabinet support rate plummeted to 48 PERCENT from the 62 PERCENT rating in the preceding month and has continued to fall.

The DPJ is aiming to win a single-party majority in this summer's election for the House of Councillors. However, a total of 55 PERCENT answered that they would not like the DPJ to achieve a single-party majority, with 31 PERCENT saying they would like the DPJ to do so. Among those with no particular party affiliation, the proportion of negative answers was even higher, reaching 62 PERCENT.

Even among DPJ supporters, the proportion of those insisting that Ozawa should explain the problem of his political funds in the Diet was as high as 72 PERCENT. Among all respondents, the proportion who believe that Ozawa should resign from his party post was 64 PERCENT (68 PERCENT in the previous poll), and a total of 69 PERCENT said they cannot approve of the DPJ's refusal to deliberate on a resolution recommending Tomohiro Ishikawa, a lawmaker seated in the House of Representatives, to resign from the Diet in connection with his alleged involvement in the questionable purchase of land by Ozawa's fund management organization. Prosecutors have now decided to drop Ozawa's case, but the public is still strongly critical of the DPJ.

On the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield facility from its current location in Okinawa Prefecture's central city of Ginowan, the Hatoyama cabinet is now looking for a new relocation site "from scratch." Asked whether they approve of the Hatoyama cabinet's way of handling the issue, 46 PERCENT were negative and 38 PERCENT affirmative.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 32 PERCENT (34 PERCENT in the previous survey) and the

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leading opposition Liberal Democratic Party was at 18 PERCENT (18 PERCENT in the previous survey).

ROOS